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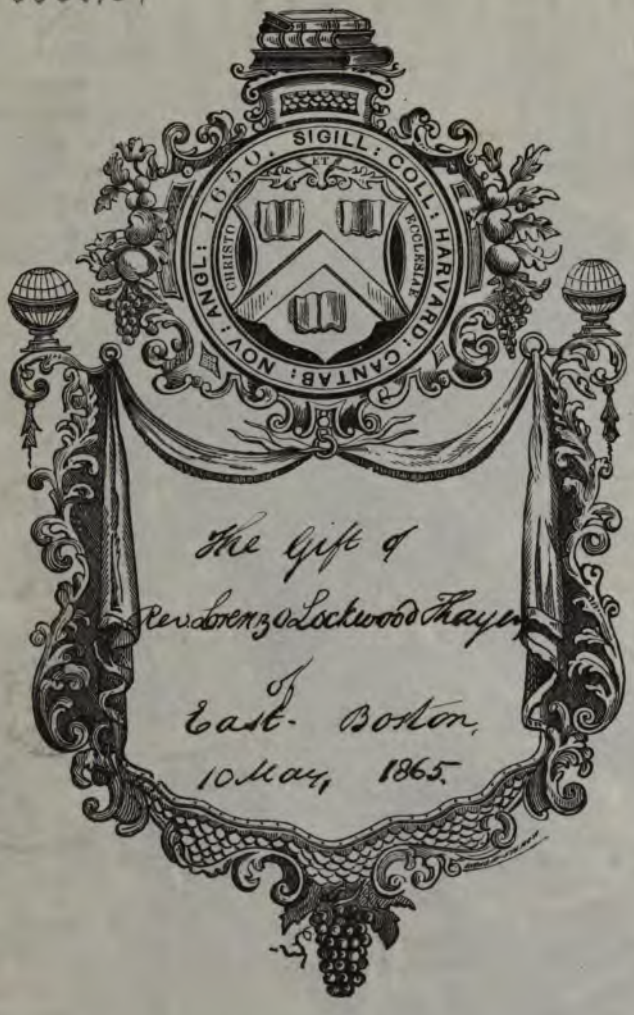


The Gift of
Rev. Lorenzo Lockwood Hayes
of
East Boston,
10 May, 1865.

WESLEYAN METHODISM A REVIVAL OF APOSTOLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

# A SERMON

PREACHED BY THOMAS JACKSON,

ON OCCASION OF

THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM,

AUGUST 5, 1839.

WESLEYAN METHODISM A REVIVAL OF APOSTOLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

# A SERMON,

PREACHED BY APPOINTMENT

BEFORE

## THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE,

ON MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 1839.

ON OCCASION OF

THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

BY THOMAS JACKSON.

METHODISM, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive church. This old religion is no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind.—JOHN WESLEY.

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# A SERMON.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i, 26–31.

The evangelical prophet charges the people of his time with criminal inattention to those lessons of practical instruction which God intended to teach them by the existing dispensations of his providence and grace. "The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine were in their feasts; but they regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands." It does not appear that, by "the work of the Lord" here mentioned, we are to understand his works of creation, which, by their magnitude, variety, and wonderful adaptation to their several ends, so strikingly demonstrate his "eternal power and Godhead;" but rather the displays of his justice and love in the infliction of punishment, and in the communication of blessings. His mercies call for gratitude and its attendant fruits; his chastisements call for humiliation and amendment; and when the gracious energy of his Spirit is put forth in the conversion and salvation of men, all are called upon diligently to improve the time of their merciful visitation. The sensual and pleasure-taking Jews saw not the hand of God lifted up among them, either in judgment or in compassion; and hence they remained uninstructed and unreformed.

A similar charge the Lord Jesus preferred against the people of his day. They manifested considerable sagacity in the ordinary concerns of life. From the aspect of the heavens they shrewdly conjectured the future state of the weather, and ordered their affairs accordingly; "but how is it," said our blessed Lord, "that ye do not discern the signs of this time?" The passing away of the sceptre from Judah, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, the visit of the wise men of the east under the guidance of a miraculous star, the prophetic rapture of Simeon and of Anna in the temple, the impressive ministry of John the Baptist, by which, for a time, the whole nation was affected, and the mighty works of Christ himself, were all lost upon the worldly part of the Jewish nation, who discovered in these things no "signs" of the Messiahship of Jesus, and no indications that they ought to receive him as the incarnate Son of God. For this obstinate and inexcusable indifference to the divine teaching and will, and for their consequent unbelief and disobedience, they were at length given up to the error and sin which they loved, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

We would avoid the sin of these people, by a careful consideration of the times in which we live, and of the duties which devolve upon us in the present state of the world and of the church. Within the last hundred years many and great changes have taken place in the general arrangements of society. The hand of God has been lifted up in anger. Wars of long continuance and of terrible severity have afflicted the European nations. That hand has also been lifted up in mercy. Religion has spread with a rapidity unknown for many ages, and agencies have been called into operation which promise the greatest spiritual benefit to the world at large. As a religious community, we have judged it incumbent upon us to celebrate the centenary of our existence by acts of devotion; and it is for this purpose that we are now assembled together. The object which I propose in my present address, is, to endeavour to make you sensible of the greatness of the benefit which we this day acknowledge, by setting before you what I conceive to be the true character of that system of evangelical doctrine and of godly discipline, which, for the sake of distinction, and not with any sinister design, we call WESLEYAN METHODISM. There are persons who regard it as an evil of frightful magnitude, which can admit of no just defence, nor even of palliation; and hence they most earnestly desire its extinction. I have no hesitation in avowing my conviction that Wesleyan Methodism, regarded as a system of means for the spiritual good of mankind, and viewed in connection with its direct influence upon the hearts and lives of men, is neither more nor less than a revival of apostolical Christianity; the Christianity which is described in the New Testament as the effect of apostolic preaching, and of that rich effusion of the Holy Spirit's influence which was graciously promised by the Lord Jesus, and which began at the Jewish feast of the pentecost. But as we cannot in one discourse pursue the subject in all its details, I shall confine myself to two points:

First, THE MINISTRY WHICH WAS EXERCISED IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE; and,

Secondly, THE EFFECT WHICH THAT MINISTRY WAS A MEANS OF PRODUCING.

Both these subjects are strikingly illustrated in the text before us.

I. The ministry in question was weak and contemptible in the world's estimation. The men who were intrusted with it enjoyed no distinction arising from birth, or rank, or learning. They were mostly selected from the humblest classes of mankind. Yet they laboured under the direct sanction of the Almighty, and were instrumental in raising up a people to whom Christ was made of God "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Such has been the character of the Wesleyan ministry since its commencement; and its direct effects we conceive to be perfectly identical with those which were produced by the preaching of the apostles and that of their fellow-helpers to the truth.

Some commentators have, indeed, given it as their opinion that by the "weak" and "foolish" things which God is here said to have "chosen," and by those who were neither "wise men after the flesh," nor "mighty," nor "noble," the apostle meant the Christian converts at Corinth and in other places; but we think that a more minute

examination of his scope and argument will produce a contrary impression, and show that the teachers of Christianity are especially intended. The parties in question, for instance, were placed in opposition to other persons and things, which they were designed to "confound" and "bring to naught;" and by these we are unquestionably to understand Jewish tradition and heathenism, with their respective advocates. Now this object was not attained by the mere conversion of a number of obscure and illiterate people, either at Corinth or in any other place, but by the faithful inculcation of evangelical truth. It was by "the preaching of the cross" that the various forms of false religion then in existence were abolished, and their adherents, both philosophic and political, were confounded. By this simple means all the pride and power of Jewish error and of heathen wisdom were put to shame.

This view of the subject is confirmed by the context. The Corinthians, to whom this epistle was addressed, had been "called" from a state of pagan ignorance, superstition, and sin, "to be saints," and also into "the fellowship" of the Son of God. Mistaking the true nature of their vocation, like the different Grecian sects they assumed the names of their favourite teachers. One said, "I am of Paul;" another, "I am of Apollos;" another, "I am of Cephas." This the apostle strongly reproves, and remarks that their "calling" to the Christian state, with all its happiness and purity, was not of man, but of God. Their teachers were only his instruments, not one of whom could be of the slightest use without his grace and blessing. All their success depended upon the effectual working of his almighty Spirit. It was therefore manifestly wrong to "glory in man," however pious, gifted, and useful he might be. The Lord alone is to be honoured as the Author of salvation, and every creature should be placed at his feet. This is obviously the bearing of the text. "Ye see your calling, brethren;" or, rather, "Ye see the calling of you;" the means by which you have been called out of the darkness and misery of your former state into the light and happiness of Christ's religion: "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" or, "have been employed in calling you," as some of the best critics supply the ellipsis. There was therefore, in every respect, a manifest impropriety in the conduct of the Corinthian church. They gloried in men who were destitute of all those distinctions which excite admiration; men who were neither "wise," nor "mighty," nor "noble," in the general sense of these terms, but rather "foolish," "weak," "base," "despised," and whom some persons would hardly acknowledge as having any existence.

The apostle then goes on to declare that this was not a casual circumstance, but a part of God's plan, and was formed with a reference to his own glory. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." The remainder of the passage bears directly upon the same subject. The mistaken Corinthians, called by the instrumentality of their teachers to the knowledge of Christ and

to the enjoyment of his salvation, most unbecomingly said: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas." No, says the apostle, "of Him are ye in Christ Jesus;" that is, It is of God that ye are in Christ Jesus; and he significantly adds: "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Thus teaching us that it is "of God" that men are made partakers of these inestimable blessings, the fruit of Christ's mediation. The design of the whole is, "that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

These brief remarks may suffice to justify the view which we take of the text, as describing, not particularly the character of the Corinthian Christians, but the ministry which had been employed in their conversion; the ministry by which idolatry was overthrown, and the religion of the Lord Jesus was established in the earth.

Before we proceed to a more minute examination of the ministry in question, it will be requisite to glance at the state of the world upon which this ministry was intended to bear. And here a melancholy scene is brought before us. Of that age it might indeed be said: "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." The Jewish church, though free from idolatrous rites, was deeply sunk in formality, skepticism, and hypocrisy. Little of piety remained among the chosen people of God, except the outward form. Many of them were resident in different towns and cities of the heathen world, where they had their synagogues and houses of prayer; and some of them "compassed sea and land to make" even one "proselyte;" but when they had succeeded in their efforts, they made the wretched convert to a new set of opinions sevenfold more a child of hell than themselves.

The state of the heathen was still worse. Never perhaps did the human intellect exist in greater strength than in the ages which immediately preceded the Christian era; and certainly it never was cultivated with greater assiduity and success. It is difficult to conceive of mightier men, intellectually considered, than were those master-spirits of Greece and Rome who figured in the senate, the forum, and the schools of philosophy. In those times literature and the arts were carried to such a state of perfection, that their productions have served as models for the imitation of civilized nations in all succeeding ages. Yet amidst all this splendour and refinement, these all but miraculous creations of genius, what was the state of the people, even the most eminent of them, with respect to religion and morals? The answer is found in the chapter before us, which contains the affecting record, THE WORLD BY WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD. The wise Socrates himself was a degraded worshipper of idols. God was not known as the Creator and Governor of the world; much less was he known as existing in three persons, and as having made provision for the salvation of sinners. The very name of Athens awakens a thousand emotions in the breast of every one who is acquainted with the history of that far-famed city; yet when St. Paul passed through it, "his spirit was stirred in him," when he saw it "full of idols," and the people "wholly given to idolatry." "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Where God is unknown, and his place is usurped

by filthy idols, there is no true religion; no spiritual worship; no holy and devout feeling; no joyous and sanctifying intercourse with the Father of spirits. And where there is no true religion, there can be no pure morality. In the absence of true religion, men do not understand the nature of the relations which they bear to one another: and if they did understand those relations, they have no adequate motives to discharge with fidelity the duties which arise from them. Nor indeed have they the moral power to do it; for they are held in spiritual bondage by "the sin that dwelleth in them;" so that they "cannot do" even "the things which they would." And hence we find, that in the most polished heathen nations every form of evil was practised as a matter of course, and without remorse. Cruel wars were carried on for the mere gratification of national resentment and ambition; the sensual appetites were even deified, and indulged without restraint; human life was wantonly sacrificed as a thing of naught; and in general society injustice, oppression, and wrong openly insulted the patience and long-suffering of God.

Such was the state of mankind when our blessed Lord, having risen from the dead, and being invested with "all power, both in heaven and in earth," commanded his apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and when he qualified them for the stupendous undertaking by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus commissioned, they went forth in the name and spirit of their great Master, preaching the word which they had received from him both to Jews and heathens. They were soon joined by a host of subordinate teachers, most of whom were their own spiritual children, who according to their various gifts and opportunities declared the same doctrine of life and salvation. "The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of the preachers;" so that, in the short space of one age, the cheering sound of mercy through the mediation of Christ went out into all lands, and was heard in every tongue.

The characteristics of this ministry were striking and peculiar. The men with whom it was intrusted were mostly plain and unlettered, taken from among the labouring poor. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," were called to this service. In selecting his agents, our blessed Lord went not either to the Jewish or Grecian schools of learning. Nor did he go to the men whose rank and office invested them with worldly power and influence; or to those who were nobly born, and deemed honourable because of their descent. One of the apostles was a publican, but the greater part of them were fishermen. St. Peter's peculiarity of "speech," in the hall of the high priest at Jerusalem, "bewrayed" him as a native of Galilee; and when he and John were arraigned before the sanhedrim, it was remarked that they were "unlearned and ignorant men." They were indeed "taught of God," in the highest and most important sense; but to human learning and refinement they made no pretensions.

Two reasons may be assigned for this selection of instruments. The first is, that if the apostles had been taken from the schools of philosophy, their success in preaching would have been ascribed to their learning and eloquence, and not to the power of God: and, secondly, they would themselves have been in danger of mixing the truth

which they had been divinely taught with the speculations and opinions of men. That mankind might receive his gospel in all its purity, and that its success might be attributed to his power, and not to secular eloquence and erudition, God chose the fishermen of Galilee as his heralds, and as the instructers and reformers of the world.

Saul of Tarsus, it is true, was a man of education, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and well instructed in Jewish literature; but then he was made the apostle of the Gentiles, among whom that kind of literature was in no repute, and of little use. That he was poor, and destitute of independent property, is manifest from the fact, that he often wrought at the business of a tent-maker to obtain the necessaries of life. We do not say that persons of rank and affluence were absolutely excluded from this ministry; but "not many" such were employed in it. Their number was inconsiderable, so as not to affect the argument.

With respect to the substance of the preaching in question, we have ample information in the New Testament. No sooner was St. Paul converted than it is said, "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God." Speaking of himself, and of his brethren in the apostleship, he says, "We preach Christ crucified." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." At Athens he "preached Jesus and the resurrection." When Philip went down to Samaria, he "preached Christ" unto the people; and when he was invited into the chariot of the Ethiopian, he "preached unto him Jesus." Their fellow-labourers all followed in the same path. Their discourses contained nothing that was speculative, uncertain, or conjectural. All was matter of testimony, and was asserted on the authority of God. They declared at once the Godhead and humanity of Christ; and they bore witness to his miracles, and his resurrection from the dead. According to them, his death was the divinely appointed sacrifice for the world's guilt, and absolutely necessary in order to the justification and salvation of sinners. With his sacrificial death they connected his intercession for the transgressors of God's law; and they called upon all men, everywhere, to repent of their sins, and believe in him, upon pain of everlasting punishment. They preached Christ, not only as dying for men, but also as living in them by his Spirit, quickening them to newness of life, and making them partakers of the divine nature. In behalf of Christ they demanded the homage and surrender of the heart, and the consequent consecration to him of every power both of mind and body, from the consideration, that men are not their own, but are his by right of purchase, being redeemed by his blood. All spiritual blessings they represented as being conveyed to men through the mediation of Christ, who is the only way of access to the Father in all acts of divine worship. Every religious and moral duty they inculcated in the name of Christ, and enforced by his authority. To him they attributed that victory over death which all believers enjoy; and his presence they described as constituting the happiness of the blessed in their disembodied state. For him they claimed an absolute and universal dominion through all time. By his power the dead will be raised, and the living "shall be changed." He shall judge all nations with perfect righteousness and equity; for he shall come again in all his Father's majesty and glory,

"taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey not the gospel," and conferring eternal life upon those who "by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality." In the ministrations of those original teachers of Christianity we observe a strict adherence to the principle which St. Paul adopted for his own guidance: "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." They connected the death of Christ most intimately with his mediatorial glory and authority, with the salvation of sinners, and with the hopes of believers; and they deduced from that death the most powerful motives to an obedient and holy life.

Those early teachers of Christianity delivered their message with the utmost simplicity of manner. Several of their oral discourses are placed upon record in the Acts of the Apostles; and it may be justly presumed that in the apostolical epistles we have a fair specimen of the form in which their instructions were generally given. Here we find no examples of rhetorical finesse, and of gaudy metaphor. The speakers present every indication of the most perfect conviction of the truth and importance of what they deliver, and appear only anxious to make it understood. To the mere arts of oratory, upon which the Greeks bestowed the greatest labour and care, they were perfectly indifferent. And this was not matter of chance, but of design, and a course to which they were led by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. On this subject St. Paul speaks distinctly. "Christ sent me," says he, "not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." We speak, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." There was the profoundest reason for all this "plainness of speech." All art, and anxious attention to rhythm and cadence, in the delivery of God's message of mercy to dying men, upon which their everlasting happiness or misery is declared to depend, would have been obviously out of place, and would indeed have awakened a just suspicion whether the gospel were in reality a divine revelation. "The testimony of God" is most appropriately delivered in its naked simplicity. It is both degraded and weakened by the paltry ornaments of an artificial rhetoric. All pomp of words is here deprecated both by piety and taste.

The ministry by which the world was in the first instance evangelized was exercised with the utmost freedom, with respect to place. The command by which it was instituted was general. "Preach the gospel to every creature," said our blessed Lord; "Go and teach all nations." When this charge was given, not one Christian place of worship had been erected; nor had the apostles then the means of erecting any. Nor did they wait for any such accommodation. They began in the temple, and then extended their labours to the Jewish synagogues. But they did not confine their ministry to ecclesiastical buildings. In Jerusalem they preached "daily," and "in every house."

St. Philip preached in a chariot, and administered the sacrament of baptism in the desert of Gaza. At Troas St. Paul preached, and united with the disciples in the holy eucharist in an "upper chamber." At Athens he preached upon "Mars' Hill." At Ephesus he disputed in defence of Christian truth "in the school of one Tyrannus." At Rome he preached for "two whole years in his own hired house." The Lord, by whom these blessed men were sent forth, had set them the example of this freedom. He preached in private houses, in fishing-boats, upon a mountain, and on a plain. The Christian ministry was instituted with reference to the salvation of men; and wherever the apostles met with a human being, they felt that they had a message from God to him; and if they could command his attention, they gladly availed themselves of the opportunity to deliver it, whereever they happened to be. All places they regarded as suitable for the instruction and conversion of redeemed men.

That the apostolic ministry was exercised in a spirit of deep and holy seriousness is very manifest. On this subject the language of the sacred writers is indeed awful and startling. Ministers, says St. Paul, "watch for souls as they that must give account;" and addressing his son Timothy, whom he tenderly loved, he says, "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

He himself laboured in the full spirit of this admonition. At Corinth he preached "with fear and much trembling." At Ephesus he "served the Lord" in the gospel "with all humility of mind, and with many tears." These "tears" were not only shed in secret, in his seasons of retirement and of self-scrutiny, but in the public delivery of God's word; for he appeals to "the elders," as the witnesses of his frequent weeping when among them. Some of his hearers "mocked" him; others hated him, and sought to take away his life; and a third class regarded both him and his gospel with scornful indifference. He felt his responsibility to God and to them, and wept while he endeavoured to convince them of the truth, and win their hearts to Christ; for he knew that if the people remained in impenitence and unbelief, they must perish everlastingly; and if they should die in their sins in consequence of any lukewarmness or neglect on his part, their blood would be required at his hands, and he would be chargeable with their guilt and endless ruin. Hence the self-denial and perseverance of these early witnesses for Christ. They voluntarily sacrificed all the pleasures of ease, and home, and kindred; and endured privations, opposition, and hardships the most appalling. Yet they never murmured; finding an ample compensation for all their toil and suffering in past success; while the love of Christ, which burned intensely within their breasts, constrained them to explore new scenes of evangelical labour, regardless of all personal considerations. To turn men to Christ, and present them perfect in him, was the one business of their lives. For this they preached, and prayed, and visited from house to house. No form of hostility disheartened them. No persecutions could induce them to falter in their career. Every one was "ready even to die for the Lord Jesus;" and no man "counted his

life dear unto himself," if he might but "testify the gospel of the grace of God," and "finish his course with joy."

The most sublime example of moral heroism ever exhibited by a body of men is that which is presented in the conduct of our Lord's apostles. Hear the affecting language of St. Paul: "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." Of himself the same apostle says, "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" In another place he says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

The ministry of these holy and devoted men was connected with incessant prayer. The apostles and their fellow-labourers regarded themselves as instruments only in the hands of God, without whom they could do nothing as it ought to be done, and nothing that could be successful. They asked of God to protect them in the midst o persecution and danger; to assist them in the delivery of his truth; to open before them new fields of useful labour; and to preserve, by his great power, the churches that had been already formed, and perfect them in holiness. When the deacons were chosen at Jerusalem, the apostles declared their purpose to "give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." At Joppa St. Peter retired to the house-top to pray. St. Paul, accompanied by Silas, prayed at

midnight in the prison at Philippi; and we learn from various passages in his epistles, that it was one great business of his life to "bow his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," both in his own behalf, and in behalf of the work in which he was engaged. "Always in every prayer" of his he made "request with joy" for his spiritual children; and at the same time his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was, that they might be saved." He called upon the Thessalonians to pray for him and his fellow-apostles "that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified;" and he urges upon the Ephesians the same duty, that "utterance" might be given to him, and that he "might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel." Epaphras, "a servant of Christ," is described by St. Paul as "always labouring fervently in prayers" for the Colossians, "that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." These cases we mention merely as examples, and in illustration of our argument. All the original teachers of Christianity were men of prayer. They asked God's blessing upon themselves, and upon every service in which they were engaged; and this was one great secret of their success. Their cry was heard in heaven; the arm of God was made bare; and the gospel which these devoted men preached came to the people everywhere, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

Such, my brethren, was the ministry by which Christianity was originally propagated. The wise men of that age despised it as "foolishness;" and the men of power contemned it as "weakness" itself. They were both mistaken. The ministry was "chosen" of God, who determined that "no flesh should glory in his presence." By this unpromising instrumentality he accomplished those great and beneficial changes among mankind which philosophy and legislation had laboured in vain to achieve. "Out of the mouths of" men, weak as "babes and sucklings" in the world's estimation, "he ordained strength" to subvert and annihilate the mighty systems of Jewish tradition and of pagan error, upheld as they were by popular prejudice, and the highest authorities, "that he might still the enemy and avenger," and lay all human pride and honour in the dust. By this instrumentality, feeble in itself, he reclaimed an apostate world from idolatry; he established the principles of truth and righteousness in the earth; he brought whole nations to honour him as the only true God; and he prepared millions of human spirits for eternal glory.

Bold and unwarrantable as some persons may deem the assumption, we claim for the Wesleyan ministry a character strikingly similar to that which we have just described as existing in the first age of the Christian church. From the beginning the Wesleyan ministry has been exercised by spiritual men. No principle has been held more sacred, and guarded with more sedulous and watchful care, than this, —That no man should be recognized as a guide in the way to heaven, unless he be walking in that way himself. Satisfactory evidence of a Scriptural conversion to God, of deep and sincere piety, and of a divine call, has ever been regarded as indispensable in a Methodist preacher. No respectability of connection, no literary acquirements, no force of natural genius and talent, could ever secure for a man ad-

mission into this ministry, in the absence of these qualifications. The fathers of our religious community concluded, that he who calls others to repentance must himself have felt its sorrows, and exhibited its fruits in his own life. He who teaches others the doctrine of justification by faith must himself have believed with the heart unto righteousness, and realized the abiding witness of his own filial relation to God. He who undertakes to explain to others the nature and importance of the regenerating, comforting, and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, must himself be a happy subject of the Spirit's operation, and be personally acquainted with the joys, and conflicts, and victories of the Christian life. It has ever been assumed in our discipline and usage, that none but a truly converted man can possess that love to Christ, and zeal for his glory, and that affectionate concern for the souls of redeemed men, without which a minister is only "sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal." That in the application of these principles practical mistakes may have been occasionally made, we acknowledge; but such are the guards and means of detection provided by our discipline, that the instances have been extremely rare. Our predecessors in this work, in their several ages, could all adopt the language of the apostle, "We have believed; and therefore do we speak." Were the Holy Spirit so to withdraw his influence from our body, as that a succession of converted men, duly qualified for the sacred office, should no longer be raised up, the Wesleyan ministry must inevitably cease; for it never can be exercised by ungodly persons without a direct violation of the essential principles of our discipline; and ungodly every man is till he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. In this we think that our ministry is truly primitive in its character. The apostles of our Lord were not allowed to enter upon the full duties of their office till they had received the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. And he was unquestionably given to them, not merely for the purpose of completing their knowledge of divine truth, but of maturing their piety. From the time at which they received "the Comforter" they were conformed to the example of their Lord as they had never been before; and there was a stability, a ripeness, and a uniformity in their personal religion which it had never previously presented. Their spirit then became eminently devout and holy. They no more spoke of calling for fire from heaven to consume their enemies. They no more engaged in ambitious disputes "which of them should be the greatest." No more did they forsake their work; for they loved the souls of men with a passion like that of their Saviour.

The objects for the attainment of which the Wesleyan ministry has ever been exercised are in full accordance with its spiritual character. It has never been a proselyting ministry. With the mere turning of men from one set of opinions to another, and the inducing of them to adopt any particular form of worship and of church order, this ministry could never be satisfied. It spurns all such low and grovelling objects, considered as an end; and aims at nothing less than the turning of men from worldliness and sin to Christ and holiness. The apostles were sent "to open the eyes of the blind, and turn them from darkness unto light; and from the power of Satan unto God; that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among

them that are sanctified." The first Methodist preachers went forth with the same design. In all their discourses they laid the utmost stress upon the new birth; by which they understood, not an outward reformation merely, nor the change which takes place in the state and relation of a child at its baptism; but the renewal of the heart in righteousness and true holiness, by the power of the Holy Ghost: such a renewal of the heart as is preceded by repentance, and faith, and the forgiveness of sins; as is accompanied by unutterable peace and joy; and expresses itself in all purity and uprightness of conduct. To the rich and the poor, the aged and the young, the formal moralist and the profligate transgressor, our fathers cried, as with a voice of thunder, "Ye must be born again, or die to all eternity!" and they felt that they had laboured in vain, unless those who heard them were thus created anew in Christ Jesus. Like St. Paul, they "travailed in birth" for souls, till Christ was thus formed in them; and then they endeavoured to build up their spiritual children in faith and love, and in holy, active zeal.

The topics which have constituted the substance of Methodist preaching have never been matters of doubtful disputation, but the great and vital truths of the gospel. The offices of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, in direct connection with the actual salvation of men, have always been the most prominent subjects of the ministry in question. The Wesleys and their fellow-labourers expatiated largely, and with undiminished interest, upon the efficacy of Christ's atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession; through which they taught their hearers to expect every spiritual blessing at the hands of God. In their discourses "Christ was all and in all." They also described with minuteness, and in detail, the operations of the Holy Ghost, in convincing men of sin, and thus leading them to repentance; communicating to them the gift of justifying faith; witnessing the personal adoption of believers; subduing in them the power of sin; administering to them gracious help in the discharge of every duty; making them perfect in love; and sealing them to the day of redemption. Theirs was truly evangelical preaching. It exhibited the blessings and privileges of Christianity in all their variety and richness, but without any approach to Antinomian error and presumption. It laid equal stress upon the twin doctrines of justification by faith in the blood of Christ, and the necessity of practical holiness in all who are justified, and born from above. In this our fathers followed the example of the apostles with strict and undeviating fidelity.

Plainness and simplicity have ever characterized the Wesleyan ministry. The Wesleys, indeed, and some of their coadjutors and successors, were men of learning; but while they thought with scholars and philosophers, like our Lord and his apostles, they adapted their discourses to the uneducated classes of the community. They did this on principle; because they sought not human honour and applause, but the salvation of the people. Of set purpose, therefore, they avoided the ornaments and trickery of that secular eloquence which some preachers have affected, and addressed themselves to the understandings and consciences of the ignorant and wicked. The great body of Methodist preachers, it is well known, having been called from the ordinary occupations of life to the work of evangelists, have

known little concerning elegance of speech. Yet their ministry has not only been intelligible to the people for whose benefit it was exercised, but powerful and effective. Concerning St. Paul at Athens, it was inquired, "What will this babbler say?" The same question has often been proposed with respect to such preachers as John Nelson, originally the stone-mason of Birstal, and John Haime, once a private soldier in the queen's regiment of dragoons. Let those who despise the inartificial ministry of such teachers, compare it with that of Peter and John, not only in the public assemblies which they addressed, but also in the presence of the rulers and magistrates before whom they were severally brought. As in the primitive times, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," have been employed in this ministry; yet has it, like that of the apostles, been characterized by a "mouth and wisdom" which no human education and training could ever supply. In full accordance with the state of things which existed in the earlier ages of the church, the evangelical "treasure" has been placed in "earthen vessels," not in vessels of gold and silver, "that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men."

Will it be said by any, that, in stating these facts, we plead for an ignorant ministry? We repel the suggestion; and maintain that, generally speaking, the Wesleyan ministry never was an ignorant one. What has it professed to teach? Not philosophy, either ancient or modern; not the ingenious dreams of Plato, nor the ethics of Epictetus; not the legends of the Jewish rabbins; not the peculiar speculations of the Christian fathers, most of whom were very inadequate expositors of Holy Scripture; but the spiritual religion of the Bible. It has professed to teach the evil and danger of sin, and the insufficiency of all mere morality and formal worship; with the manner in which men may obtain the blessing of pardon, and of purity of heart, qualifying them to worship God in spirit and in truth. On all questions connected with conversion, and with religious experience and practice, it has ever been, as a whole, an enlightened and impressive ministry, equal we believe to that which has been exercised in any section of the universal church since the apostolic times. In confirmation of this view, we appeal to the effects of the Wesleyan ministry in every quarter of the globe; "for this thing was not done in a corner." We refer to the ten thousand societies of devout people, raised up by God's blessing upon this ministry, both at home and abroad; and we say, not with vain boasting, but with adoring thankfulness, "These are our epistles, known and read of all men." "The seals of our apostleship are these in the Lord."

From the beginning the Wesleyan ministry, like that of the apostles, has been aggressive. It has never assumed that mankind in general are duly alive to their spiritual interests; that they will, of their own accord, call in the aid which is requisite in order to their instruction and salvation; and that, therefore, the ministers of Christ should wait till their services are actually desired and applied for in any given locality. It has rather assumed the natural ignorance and depravity of men; their love of sin, and of flattering error; their aversion to truth and holiness; and that, therefore, they must be sought and warned, that they may repent and be saved. The Wesleys went not, in the

first instance, to places remarkable for piety, where they had reason to expect a kind reception; but to places where ignorance was the most profound, where wickedness was general and daring, and where their labours were the most needed, but undesired and unwelcome. Acting thus upon the apostolic plan, they often preached in the open air, in barns, in private houses, under the shade of a tree, in neglected villages and hamlets, spurning the trammels which canons of modern date have imposed upon the servants of the Lord Jesus, and practically asserting the liberty wherewith he had made them free. In doing this they not unfrequently stirred up that hostility of which Christ forewarned his disciples, when he said, "I came not to bring peace upon earth, but a sword." In the enforcement of hated truth, and the exposure of error and sin, the Methodist preachers have many times been assailed by riotous mobs, and exposed to great personal danger. The tumult at Ephesus, when the people deprecated all interference with their religious views and habits, and for three hours cried, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and the commotion in Jerusalem, when all the city "was in an uproar," were scarcely more violent than the riots at Wednesbury, at Devizes, at Cork, at Wrangle, and in a hundred other places, where Methodist preachers were objects of popular vengeance, simply because they declared the insufficiency of all merely formal religion, and endeavoured to convince the people that they must be both inwardly and outwardly holy before they could enter into heaven. Yet, as in the case of the apostles, those popular tumults, by whomsoever stimulated and headed, "turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel" than to the obstruction of its progress. Many of the Methodist preachers, in the midst of their labours and persecutions, have endured the pinchings of hunger and want; and might with truth have adopted the language of St. Peter, addressed to the lame man at the gate of the temple, "Silver and gold have I none." Their garb was often mean; their manners were plain and unassuming; their spirit was meek and forbearing, but firm and determined; and there was an energy of truth and wisdom in their speech, which frequently conveyed light and conviction to the consciences of careless men, while it awed into silence and attention the noisy and unwieldy crowds by whom they were surrounded.

Like the first teachers of Christianity, the great body of the Methodist preachers have never expected the slightest success in their ministrations independently of the Holy Spirit's influence. As that influence is promised in answer to prayer, in exact proportion as ministers enter into the spirit of their sacred calling, they are diligent and importunate in their applications to the throne of the heavenly grace. No man can read the biography of the elder Methodist preachers without being impressed with the fact, that this was eminently their practice. They were mighty in prayer, and spent much time in the holy exercise; labouring to excite the same spirit in all their societies and congregations. John Nelson, we are informed, was accustomed, even to the end of his life, to rise at midnight for the purpose of calling upon God. Thomas Walsh always went from his knees in his closet to the pulpit, and from the pulpit to his closet again, pleading with God for a blessing upon his own word. Hence the honour which God put upon these his servants, clothing their word with power, and giving

them many seals to their ministry. In this practice their brethren and successors have been like-minded. They have "wept and made supplication" for the success of their labours; being aware that without much prayer no man ever succeeded in "turning many to righteousness."

When we contend for what we conceive to be a striking similarity between the Wesleyan ministry and that by which Christianity was first established in the world, let it not be supposed that we put either ourselves or our revered fathers upon an equality with the apostles. The apostolic office, strictly speaking, was distinct and peculiar. An apostle was one who had "seen the Lord," and was a witness of his resurrection. He had received his knowledge of Christian doctrine, not from men, but from the Son of God himself, by whose Spirit he was "led into all the truth." The apostles had "the mind of Christ," and were the authorized expounders of his gospel, being endued with various spiritual gifts, and with the power of working miracles. They were inspired men, in the full and adequate sense of that expression. The church is "built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Our Lord, therefore, said to them, in a sense which is applicable to no other men: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" and, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." St. John in the Apocalypse saw "the holy Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven;" and "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Hence it appears that the apostles had no predecessors in the office which they sustained, and no men succeeded them in it.

The word of the twelve is law till the end of time. He who rejects their doctrine rejects the truth to which the almighty Son of God has set his seal, and to which the eternal Father is pledged. No other ministers of Christ, let their acquirements and rank be what they may, can ever lay just claim to these high and sacred prerogatives. From an equality with the apostles, the loftiest prelate is at as great a distance as the humblest itinerant evangelist. We challenge no such distinction either in behalf of the Wesleys, or of the most eminent of their associates. They received their knowledge of divine truth, not from the personal teaching of Christ, as the apostles did, nor from the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but from the sacred Scriptures, to which they made a constant appeal, as their only authority; for they brought no new revelation to mankind. In the interpretation of Scripture, they neither claimed nor expected any assistance higher than that of the ordinary influence of the Spirit of God. Not one of them had "seen the Lord" in the flesh, nor were any of them endued with spiritual gifts but such as are attainable by all the servants of Christ. To miracles, in the strict and theological sense of that term, they never pretended. What we maintain is, that with respect to doctrine and spirit, as well as with respect to outward form and character, the Wesleyan ministry is apostolical. It has ever been characterized by a large measure of that zeal and self-denial of which the apostles were such remarkable examples, and by apostolic simplicity of manner, by apostolic purpose, and by apostolic truth.

It should, however, be observed that the apostles were not the only

men that were employed in the original propagation of the gospel. There was a large class of persons engaged in this work who were as destitute of apostolical inspiration as we ourselves, whatever other gifts they might possess. Apollos, for instance, whom St. Paul mentions with honour, as having with himself successfully ministered to the Corinthian church, was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," as well as "fervent in spirit." He "helped them much which had believed through grace," and at the same time he "mightily convinced the Jews, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Yet this very eminent teacher was so far from receiving his knowledge of Christian truth by immediate inspiration, that for a time he knew "only the baptism of John," and was actually "instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord" by Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Timothy and Titus acted a very prominent and important part in the early church; yet they needed to be themselves taught the duties of their office by St. Paul, who addressed epistles to them for this purpose. Had they been inspired men, as he himself was, he would hardly have done this. He wrote no such epistles to his apostolical brethren Peter and John, nor they to him. The fact is, that when Christianity was first carried beyond the Holy Land, not the apostles, but subordinate teachers, were employed in the service. "They that were scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word;" and it is expressly stated that the apostles were not among them. They remained at that time in Jerusalem, and when this work began St. Paul was not converted.

In addition to this, it should also be stated that a system of mutual instruction and exhortation was carried on in the apostolic churches by private Christians. To the Colossians St. Paul says: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." He addresses the Thessalonians in similar language: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." He reproves the Hebrews for their negligence in the study of divine truth; so that, when they "ought to have been teachers," they were unqualified for the task. "And let us consider one another," says he, "to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Hence it is evident that in the primitive church, while there was an order of men who were "separated unto the gospel of God" from all secular business, except in cases of necessity, that they might give themselves wholly to the duties of the ministry, theirs was not the only agency that was employed, either in the conversion of the ungodly or the building up of believers. To a certain extent, "all the Lord's people were prophets." They all exerted themselves, according to their several abilities and opportunities, to convince those that were without of the truth and blessedness of Christianity, and by mutual exhortation to edify one another in faith and love. That such has been the practice of our community

from the beginning is matter of notoriety. Our weekly class meetings are formed upon this very principle; and our local preachers and exhorters, our Sunday-school teachers, our tract distributers, and the visiters of our Stranger's Friend societies, are all engaged substantially in the same work—that of making Christ and his salvation known.

From the particulars which we have thus enumerated, we think ourselves fully borne out in the conclusion which we proposed to establish; namely, that there is a striking similarity between the ministerial agency which God employed in the first planting of Christianity in the world, and that which, for one hundred years, has been exercised by our religious community. In the Wesleyan connection, as well as in the apostolic times, there have been men "in labours more abundant," who have carried the truth into "the regions beyond," with a zeal and an energy, a devotedness and singleness of heart, worthy of the brightest era of the church, when she was instinct with spiritual life, and existed in all her freshness and vigour under the pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, St. Mark, St. Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, and others, as well as the seventy disciples, and our blessed Lord himself, were all itinerant teachers of religion; and in this they have been imitated by our venerable founder and his fellow-labourers, who, when they have been pressed to confine their ministrations to particular places, have each of them, in effect, answered in the name and words of his great Exemplar and Lord, "I must preach the kingdom of God in other cities also; for therefore am I sent." No man was more competent to estimate the advantages of the parochial system than Mr. Wesley; but at the same time he knew that, great as are its advantages, it has never fully met the spiritual necessities of even the people of this country. It needs to be "supplemented" by other plans of evangelical operation, and especially by an itinerant ministry; and hence, when he was urged to confine his labours according to the parochial rule, he emphatically answered: "The world is my parish."

II. But the preaching of the gospel, like ecclesiastical discipline, is only a means to an end. The question, therefore, arises, "What was the result of the apostolic preaching?" In other words, "What was its effect upon mankind?" This question is answered in the text. The direct result of the apostolical preaching was the raising up of a people, to whom Christ was "made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." With this we contend that the fruit of the Wesleyan ministry is perfectly identical. Let us proceed to the proof.

1. By "wisdom," in this place, I apprehend we are to understand the gospel revelation, to which this name is often given by St. Paul, and which all sincere Christians receive under that character. The various moral systems which were promulgated by the Greek philosophers were called "wisdom," although most of them ill deserved the name, as being founded in error, and leading to no beneficial end. They afforded no relief to the guilty conscience; they imposed no effectual restraint upon the evils of our fallen nature, and they infused no principle of holiness. They left men under the guilt and power of sin, without either happiness or hope. St. Paul contemns all these systems together, and denominates them "the wisdom of men," and

"the wisdom of this world." He declares that they "come to naught;" though they were invested with all the charms of eloquence and poetry, and recommended by men of high intellectual authority. This declaration concerning them has been fully verified. They have been supplanted by evangelical truth, and are now only remembered as the speculations of ingenious and erring men.

On the other hand, the gospel is "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory;" and it is worthy of the name. It is absolute truth, and all its principles and arrangements display a wisdom more than human. The object which it proposes is not the mere regulation of the conduct of men in the various relations of the present transitory life, important as that is confessed to be, but the everlasting salvation of sinful men; and the means which it proposes for the attainment of this object exhibit all the glories of the divine nature with equal lustre. Man is under the sentence of death, a convicted and helpless transgressor of his Maker's law. The Son of God becomes incarnate, and dies in the sinner's stead. In this wonderful dispensation we see mercy in all its tenderness, and justice in all its inflexibility. Holiness and love are here blended in all their effulgence. The sinner is saved, and yet the rights of government and the authority of law are equally maintained. In honour of the Son of God, now invested in his mediatorial office with the highest glory, blessings descend upon mankind through all time and all eternity, and yet upon such terms as give no encouragement to sin. Those who are saved are made as striking examples of personal purity as they are of the divine compassion.

This system of divine truth is every way complete. It fully answers the question, "What must I do to be saved?" At the same time it places before us every obligation under which we lie, and shows us how we may obtain the requisite ability for the acceptable discharge of every duty, and the means by which we may at length gain an abundant entrance into a world of perfect knowledge and enjoyment. For our acquaintance with these blessed truths we are indebted to the Lord Jesus. But for his teaching they never could have been discovered by men: and he has revealed them, not as subjects of speculation and controversy, but as truths to be believed, and reduced to practice. When they are cordially embraced, in all their practical bearing, and when they are felt in all their solemn weight and importance, they make men wise in the best possible sense; wise unto salvation; for they impress upon the human spirit a character of the divine wisdom. Thus the gospel was received by the early converts, who renounced at once the polluting rites of idolatry, the vices to which they had all their lives been addicted, and the bewildering speculations of their wise men. Christ then became their wisdom. Many of them burned their heathen books; for they found in the gospel all the instruction that they needed, both in regard of their spiritual interests and their duty. This entire, practical, and child-like submission to the truth, the apostle describes as their "simplicity in Christ," from which some of them were in danger of being drawn aside. Hence his warning to the Colossians: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." "Ye are

complete in him." He has given us a perfect system of divine instruction; and to understand and exemplify all that he has taught is the highest wisdom of which human nature is capable.

2. The term "righteousness," which is used in the text, is doubtless to be understood in the sense of justification: a name which is given, especially by St. Paul, to one of the most important blessings of the evangelical covenant. Justification stands opposed to condemnation, and comprehends the full and free forgiveness of all past sins, however aggravated and numerous they may have been. This great blessing is the foundation of all personal religion, and of all spiritual enjoyment both in time and eternity. Till men are justified they are neither safe nor happy; for they are under the sentence of everlasting death, and are destitute both of holiness and of solid peace. Sin has the dominion over them, and their consciences are defiled with guilt. Holiness and joy follow this blessing, but can never go before it.

The doctrine of justification forms the most prominent subject in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Galatians. It is placed by him in various lights, every one of which is full of instruction and of interest. He describes it as consisting in the pardon and remission of sin; but, as if this language did not express the full import of the blessing, he speaks of it as justification, and the imputation of righteousness, terms which are borrowed from the Old Testament, having been first used with respect to Abraham, concerning whom it is said that "he believed God, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Two reasons may be assigned for the use of this most significant phraseology. First, the blessing in question is conferred upon mankind in a manner which exhibits the righteousness or justice of God in equal prominence with his goodness and mercy. It is bestowed upon them through the sacrificial death of Christ, by which an atonement was made for sin, and the justice of God was satisfied. God is therefore just, as well as compassionate, in cancelling the guilt of penitent and believing men. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And, secondly, the blessing in question invests men with all the privileges of righteousness. Sinners as we have been, and under the curse, when we are "accepted in the Beloved," we have the gracious right of free access to God, under whose favour and protection we are placed, and by whom we are treated as just men. There is no "charge" against us. "Being justified by his grace we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." We are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

In the attainment of this blessing human merit has no place. By the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified before God. The atonement of Christ is the sole meritorious cause of our justification; which is received, not by works of righteousness, but by faith; and of that faith the blood of Christ is the object. The sinner is made sensible of his guilt, misery, and helplessness; in a penitent state of heart he trusts in Christ's atonement, as the only ground of his acceptance; and he thus freely passes from death unto life. "To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." It is not the righteous, but the "ungodly," that are justified; and it is by faith that they apprehend the blessing.

According to the New Testament, personal happiness is directly consequent upon justification. The justified have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" they "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the atonement;" and they also "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Nor is this at all surprising; for their consciences are purged from dead works, by an application of the blood of Christ; and God hath "sent forth into their hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." They are "filled with all joy and peace in believing," and "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

3. The term "sanctification" signifies our recovery to holiness. It is applied in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the whole of the Jewish tribes; not because they were all actually holy, but because they were separated from the idolatrous nations of the earth for holy purposes, and because personal holiness was one great object of their separation. The word is to be understood in a much higher sense when it is applied to believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. Their sanctification is not relative merely, but real and personal. Its principle is divine love; the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake. Where this love is, sin is subdued, and all the fruits of righteousness appear. There silent submission to the will of God is combined with untiring zeal for the advancement of his work and honour; and meekness and contentment are seen in beautiful connection with active benevolence, and the undeviating practice of justice and truth.

Evangelical sanctification admits of different degrees. It begins with the new birth, which is immediately consequent upon justification. After this there is a gradual mortification of sin, and growth in holiness; but there must be a point of time at which sin ceases to exist in the heart, and love is made perfect. Sanctification therefore is instantaneous, as well as gradual. That this state of entire sanctification is attainable in this life we think is manifest from the Scriptures of truth; and to this state every believer is bound to aspire. The Lord is indeed ready to do for his people exceeding abundantly above all that they either ask or think; and with nothing less than the full sanctification to God of their body, soul, and spirit, should they ever be satisfied. They are to present themselves continually to him as a holy living sacrifice.

It is Christ that is made unto us "sanctification," as well as "righteousness" and "wisdom." He is the great pattern and example of holiness to which we are to be conformed. As he was, so are we to be, even in this world. He has supplied "the truth" which is to be the instrument of our sanctification in its entire process; according to his prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." It is to his merit and intercession that we are indebted for the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whose power we are created anew, and made partakers of the divine nature. "That he might sanctify the people with his own blood, he suffered without the gate;" and his "blood cleanseth from all sin." Of all the glorified human spirits in heaven it is said, that they "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

As the sanctification of our nature is necessary in order to the purity and uprightness of our conduct in this life, (for the tree must be

made good, that the fruit may be good,) so it is necessary in order to our final happiness. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "The pure in heart" only shall "see God," so as to enjoy him for ever.

4. By the "redemption" which is mentioned in the text, it does not appear that we are to understand the redemption by price which Christ accomplished when he died upon the cross, or at least not exclusively; but rather the final result of that redemption, the complete deliverance of his people from all evil, which will take place when he shall come to judge the world. In this sense the word is used on other occasions by the inspired apostle. Addressing the Romans, for instance, he says, "Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;" and he speaks to the Ephesians as being "sealed with the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption." He declares also that the Holy Ghost is given to believers as the "earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession:" that is, till the whole church, purchased by the blood of Jesus, shall be actually delivered from every evil, and fully glorified with him in heaven.

Though the children of God are already justified and sanctified, yet are they still subjected to various infirmities and afflictions, which have been entailed upon them in consequence of sin; and after all the calamities and sorrows of life they must sink into the humiliation and dishonour of the grave. A full deliverance, however, the ultimate fruit of Christ's redemption, is promised, and is therefore absolutely sure. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." The Almighty Saviour shall "change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body;" that, in union with the deathless spirit, it may be strong to endure the beatific vision, the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and in all the vigour of undecaying youth may spend eternity itself in the worship of God and of the Lamb. The realizing faith of the first Christians brought near to their minds this joyful day of their redemption; and the earnest hope of having their part in its triumphs gave constancy and fortitude to the martyrs and confessors, and even caused them to clap their hands in the scorching flame. It was in this sense that they were "saved by hope."

Such, my brethren, were the effects which were produced by God's blessing upon the preaching of the apostles, and of their fellow-labourers in the gospel. From among both Jews and heathens a people were raised up to whom the Lord Jesus was "made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Large and flourishing churches, bearing this character, were formed in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Rome, in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Thessalonica, in Colosse, and in some hundreds of other places, in the members of which all these characteristics were found. They cordially received the gospel of Christ as their "wisdom." They trusted in his atonement for justification, and rejoiced in the possession of the inestimable blessing. They were sanctified to God by the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in them;

and they demonstrated the holiness of their hearts by that of their lives. Trusting in the truth and omnipotence of their Saviour, they joyfully anticipated the day when there shall be no more death, neither pain, nor sorrow. Hence arose their holy cheerfulness under all the ills of life, their diligence in duty, and their joys under the agonies of martyrdom. They felt that for them "to live was Christ, and to die was gain."

When we contend that the effects of the Wesleyan ministry are perfectly identical with those which we have just described, as existing in the apostolical churches, we speak with the fullest confidence. In maintaining this point, we conceive that we are borne out by what our eyes have seen, and by the entire history of our religious community. What has been the general character of the people who have been called out of the world, and united together in Christian fellowship, during the last hundred years, by means of the Wesleyan ministry? We answer, without hesitation, Their character has been essentially that which the text describes. The members of our societies have ever acknowledged the gospel as their "wisdom." They have studied it with deep seriousness, as that by which they were to be both saved and judged; and they have adventured their everlasting interests upon its truth. Like the first Christians, they have been convinced of sin, and have wept and mourned under a distressing consciousness of their guilt, and exposure to God's wrath. In this state they have prayed for pardon. They have earnestly sought it through faith in the sacrifice of Christ; and they have declared, as with one voice, that when they were enabled to believe in his name, they were filled with peace and joy. This peace and joy have been as permanent as the faith by which they were first obtained. Through life they have acknowledged no ground of justification but the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of the Lord Jesus. Redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, they have ever regarded as one of the most important and distinguishing of all their spiritual privileges.

Sensible of the evils of their nature, they have prayed for a clean heart, and declared that, with the primitive disciples, they received the promised "gift of the Spirit through faith;" the same faith as that by which the blessing of justification was obtained. The renewal of their nature by his inspiration was to them matter of personal consciousness; but we ask no man to believe their unsupported testimony. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Thousands and tens of thousands of people, raised up in connection with the Wesleyan ministry, in various ages and countries, and in the various gradations of society, have, from the period of their conversion, till their actual dissolution, presented in their daily conduct all the marks of evangelical sanctification. They have delighted in God's ordinances and worship, they have been examples of self-government; and they have discharged with fidelity the relative duties of husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. In their general intercourse with mankind they have been at once benevolent, and strictly just. And not a few of these very people, before their conversion, were notoriously ignorant of divine things, and even profligate in their habits.

That the people, thus pardoned and renewed, confide in the Lord Jesus for final "redemption," is evident from their feelings and pros-

pects with regard to futurity. How many of them on the bed of mortal sickness, though surrounded with domestic attractions, and even young in years, have rejoiced to find that "the time of their departure was at hand!" They have "gloried in dissolution near," and without a murmur have closed their eyes upon every earthly object, "in sure and certain hope of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." As a specimen we may mention the case of the venerable Walter Griffith. When dying, he exclaimed, "I have gained that which is beyond all price! Let all go but Christ and heaven!" In all this there is nothing new. Such scenes were of daily occurrence in the primitive churches; and when they are now presented to our view, we recognise in them the power and excellence of apostolical Christianity. We do not say that all the members of our societies have attained to this state. Some of them neglect to make their calling and election sure, and others grow weary in well doing. Thousands of them, however, from the beginning have in all things adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Will it be objected, that in some of the Wesleyan societies a spirit of faction and of insubordination has sprung up at different times; and that instances of unfaithfulness, and even of direct immorality, have occurred? We confess the fact: and we confess it with shame and humiliation. But then we remark, that cases equally atrocious took place also in the apostolical churches, which called for the exercise of a severe, but wholesome discipline. In the very bosom of the Ephesian church St. Paul declared that "men would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them;" and in the church at Corinth a crime was committed, "such as was not even named among the heathen." Among the apostles, who were chosen and trained by the Lord Jesus, there was a restored Judas, whose name expresses every thing that is base and wicked. While our world remains a place of trial, and while temptations to evil abound, cases of infidelity, and even of apostacy, must be expected. They cause the name of Christ to be blasphemed, but they confirm our argument. "There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest."

Some persons will probably deny that the results of the apostolic ministry, and of that which is exercised in the Wesleyan body, are identical; inasmuch as the parties upon whom these effects are said to be wrought are very dissimilar. The first converts to Christianity were Jews and heathens; whereas those of Methodism were beforehand Christians, at least in profession. In this case we acknowledge, to a great extent, the justness of the premises, but deny the conclusion. When the Wesleys and their associates entered upon their itinerant ministry they found the generality of their hearers so far prepared as to assent to an appeal to the Scriptures, and to the formularies of Protestant Christianity. For this preparation of the people they were principally indebted to the established Church, which had preserved the forms of divine worship in every part of the land, and which, thus far, was an immense public benefit, although it had left vast multitudes not only strangers to spiritual religion, but grossly ignorant and immoral. Such was the former character of many of those who, after their conversion, have been among the most devout and ex-

emplary members of our societies. That they were not idolaters, was simply owing to the circumstance that they were not born in a heathen land; for their attention had never been seriously directed to the subject of religion till they were awakened and alarmed by Methodist preaching. Thousands of such men, who were a perfect scandal to the Christian name, as well as many others, who rested in the mere forms of Christianity, have, by the ministry in question, been quickened into newness of life. They have "put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We maintain, then, that in all these cases the result of Methodist preaching is precisely that of the preaching of the primitive disciples. The only difference is, that the people were better prepared to receive the truth than were many of the Jews and heathens to whom the apostles ministered. And yet sometimes these original teachers of Christianity met with people who were at least equally prepared of the Lord. Such were Cornelius and Lydia; and such too were the devout Jews at Berea, who candidly appealed to their own Scriptures, and "received the word with all readiness of mind."

But all the people upon whom the effects in question have been produced by means of the Wesleyan ministry have not been thus prepared. There are in our societies some thousands of converted heathens, who present all the characteristics which were seen in the first Christians. They are to be found among the Indians of North America; the negroes in the West Indies; the Kaffers, and other tribes of Southren and Western Africa; the Brahmins and Hindoos of Ceylon and Continental India; and among the once savage and cannibal islanders of the South Seas. To these outcasts of men, who have attended no ministry but that of our religious community, Christ "is made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" though they were once as deeply sunk in ignorance, idolatry, superstition, sensuality, and barbarism, as were any of the heathens that received the truth in the apostolic age. "But they are washed, but they are sanctified, but they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." To these heathen converts, as well as to the ten thousand converts from a merely nominal Christianity to Christianity in its life and power, we appeal in support of our position.

Here then we rest our argument. The Wesleyan ministry, and that by which Christianity was first planted in the world, answer to each other, not in circumstances merely, but in their great and leading features; and the effects of both are the same. The Christianity which was preached, experienced, and practised in the primitive churches of Asia, Africa, and Europe, exists in its original purity and blessedness in the Wesleyan societies of Great Britain, America, the African and Asiatic Continents, and in the islands of the sea.

We regard this as matter of adoring gratitude to the God of all grace: for the true conversion of men to the religion of the Lord Jesus argues an exertion of the divine power. It is "of God" that Chrst is made to any man "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This the apostle here expressly declares. It was by the secret, but effectual, working of the power of God, that

the Jews were induced to renounce the "tradition of the elders," and the Greeks the mythology and philosophy of their fathers, and that both, in opposition to their long-cherished prejudices, received the gospel of Christ as "wisdom from God." It was by the operation of the Almighty Spirit that these people, hardened in sin, were effectually humbled under a sense of their guilt and demerit, and were brought to trust in Christ's atonement for pardon and acceptance. All that followed their penitence and their faith was "of God." Their justification was his act. The peace and joy with which they were filled, the inward and outward holiness of which they became examples, and their exulting anticipations of final redemption, were all the effects of his inspiration. In this light they are everywhere represented in the apostolical epistles. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

To what then shall we attribute the same effects, when we see them wrought, as they have been in instances innumerable, by means of the Wesleyan ministry? Will any one maintain that, in these cases, the Ethiopian has changed his own skin, and the leopard his spots? that those who were dead in trespasses and sins have quickened themselves to a new and holy life? that wicked, profane, and sensual men, the slaves of brutal vice, have sanctified their own nature, and implanted in themselves the love of universal holiness? Or, rather than confess the hand of God in these effects, when they are produced by the Wesleyan ministry, will any persons ascribe them to a diabolical influence? Will they tell us that Satan is so far divided against himself as to be directly concerned in turning these sinners to Christ, and in inspiring them with the holy and devout affections which they undeniably possess? With such persons we will not argue. If they will thus give the lie to God's own inspired book, and blaspheme what he declares to be the work of his own Spirit, let them answer to him. There is, however, one denunciation of Scripture which they would do well seriously to ponder: "Beware lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you;" and though the effects of his power and mercy are everywhere manifest, and appeal to the very senses of mankind.

Having, then, the express warrant of Holy Scripture, we will not hesitate, after the example of our fathers, to call the holy service in which we are engaged "the work of God." The circumcision of the heart he declares to be wrought by himself. Those who are regenerated, so that they "sin not," are "born from above," and "born of the Spirit." When men are "cleansed from all their idols and" moral "filthiness," it is God that has "sprinkled clean water upon" them in order to this end. We say, then, to our societies, by whomsoever they may be traduced, as St. Paul said to the Corinthian church: "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The seed of truth which has been sown, the fertilizing dews and showers which have fallen upon it, the fair blossoms and fruits of righteousness, which have successively appeared

in all their richness and beauty, are all of God. The skill and diligence of the husbandman have also both been derived entirely from him. Let him, therefore, have the exclusive glory of his own work. Whatever has marred that work is of man. The good is all divine.

III. Regarding Wesleyan Methodism as a revival of primitive Christianity, the effect of a direct interference from the God of all grace, we have a distinct and impressive view of the duties of this day. We are assembled to celebrate the centenary of this work, of which we confess God to be the author. Considering its nature, the extent to which it has spread, its continuance, and its present state, our gratitude ought to assume a character of peculiar intensity, and our united praises and thanksgivings should ascend to heaven like a cloud of incense.

One hundred years ago the two Wesleys were led to renounce the ascetic and mystical philosophy of William Law, and embrace the gospel of the Lord Jesus in its simplicity. Then it was, and not before, strictly speaking, that Christ was made unto them "wisdom." It was not long before they were enabled to believe in him as the great and all-sufficient atonement for sin; and they felt, with the early converts, that he was made unto them "righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." They rejoiced in his pardoning mercy, in his sanctifying grace, and in the bright prospect of eternal glory. It was "of God" that they thus embraced the truth, and were made new men. Constrained by the love of Christ, they declared to others what great things the Lord had done for them, and the manner in which he had made them free from the guilt, the dominion, and the misery of sin. In the midst of much opposition, many believed the report, and in the same manner entered into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The work, small at its commencement, spread from man to man, from family to family, from town to town, and then from nation to nation; and it still spreads with undiminished energy, carrying peace and holiness in its train. Myriads of people in our societies, at this day, enjoy the salvation which the Wesleys obtained in the memorable Whitsunweek, in the year 1738, and which from that time they recommended to all men as "the common salvation." Who can estimate the amount of good which has arisen from this work since it first began? the personal and domestic comfort; the spiritual life infused into other religious communities; the happiness enjoyed by the ten thousands of glorified human spirits now in the heavenly paradise; and the multitudes of people, in different parts of the world, who are on their way thither, and will soon share in the same bliss? Perhaps scarcely an hour passes in which one person, at least, belonging to the Wesleyan section of the catholic church, does not die in the Lord and enter into rest.

At every stage of its progress this work has been carried on, not by an agency possessing in itself any inherent power, but by an agency which the world has despised, and even laughed to scorn. Yet is the work every way worthy of God. It is a holy work; it is big with mercy to the world; and it has triumphed over formidable difficulties and opposition. Controversialists have assailed its theology; a fierce radicalism has attempted to subvert its godly discipline; private influence andthe public press have leagued themselves to effect its over

throw. Argument, philosophy, satire, ridicule, sarcasm, and misrepresentation, have all been brought to bear against it. Yet not only are our ministry and discipline preserved in all their efficiency, but the great design of both is most blessedly realized. In our congregations conversions are perhaps as numerous at this day as they ever were. Often has our religious community been tried as by fire; but it has never been forsaken, and never been in despair. Adversaries without, and false brethren within, have filled us with alarm; but the Lord has always sustained and delivered us; he has made us at this day a more numerous and a more united people than we were at any period of our existence; and he has given us means and opportunities of usefulness to the world far beyond what we ever previously possessed. How applicable to us are the words of the prophet! "Thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured sh ll learn doctrine." Under these circumstances it becomes us with all humility to bow at the footstool of our gracious God, and lift up our voices to him in thankfulness and adoration. And let us not confine these acts of devotion to our public assemblies, but extend them to our families and closets, and endeavour to engage all around us in the same holy service. This is indeed to us a day of holy gladness. The Lord hath done great things for us, and our hearts are affected while we survey his mighty acts. He hath given us a place and a name among his adopted children; he hath received to himself, from among our elder brethren, a multitude which we cannot number, many of whom were members of our own families, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and we shall soon join them, and share in their joy; for "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What shall we render to the Lord for benefits and blessings like these? May it please our gracious God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to accept the offering of our hearts and hands!

The revival of spiritual religion which we this day commemorate has not been confined to our own community. It has extended to the established church of this country, which is at present in a condition immensely superior to that in which it was when the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield entered upon their self-denying labours. An improvement equally marked and striking has taken place among the evangelical sects both of Great Britain and America. In nothing is this improved state of religion more manifest than in the missionary zeal and liberality which we every where witness. If we would fully appreciate the amount of the benefit which we this day acknowledge, we must look beyond the pale of our own societies, and survey the godly order and active piety of other sections of the church, upon whom the Lord of all has richly poured out his quickening and sanctifying Spirit. From all bigotry and unchristian exclusiveness I trust we shall ever stand aloof, and with perfect cordiality acknowledge as our brethren and kinsmen all to whom Christ is made of God "wisdom, and

righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," by whatever names they may be called, and wherever their lot may be cast. God forbid that we should offer any hinderance to the fulfilment of our Saviour's prayer for his followers: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

One of the most anxious and becoming inquiries that we can this day make with reference to our own community, is, "By what means can this work be effectually perpetuated and transmitted to future generations?" The most obvious answer to this inquiry is, that the ministry among us must be preserved in all its simplicity and power. We hear much in the present day concerning what is called "apostolical succession;" by which is meant a succession of ministers, in a direct and unbroken line from the apostles, who have received their appointment from bishops, as a distinct and peculiar order: a thing which Mr. Wesley declared to be a dream, which no man ever did or ever can prove. There is, however, an "apostolical succession" of a very different kind, and one in which every minister should be careful to stand, or he will be found an intruder into the sacred office, whom the Lord will at last disown and punish. The true "apostolical succession" is a succession to a ministry which is characterized by apostolical truth, by apostolical zeal and faithfulness, by apostolical efficiency and power, by apostolical labour and self-denial, and by apostolical success. In this succession we believe that our fathers stood; and we ourselves are in it as far as we are actuated by the same spirit, and tread in their steps, but no farther. The mere laying on of hands, whether episcopal or presbyterian, in the absence of sound evangelical knowledge, of deep personal piety, of the divine call and inward motion of the Holy Spirit, and of his rich anointing, can never form the genuine ministerial character. To perpetuate in our connection such a ministry as that in question, there must be on the part of the conference, supported by the general feeling of our societies, a strict adherence to the principles upon which our fathers acted in the appointment of ministers. "How shall we try those who think they are moved by the Holy Ghost, and called of God, to preach?" said Mr. Wesley. The answer is: "Inquire, 1. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2. Have they gifts, as well as grace, for the work? Have they, in some tolerable degree, a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, and clearly? 3. Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God, by their preaching? As long as these three marks concur in any, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as a sufficient proof that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost."

It is here assumed that the true ministers of the Lord Jesus are specially chosen and called of God to this work; a principle which is distinctly recognised in the text: "God hath *chosen* the foolish things of this world;" "God hath *chosen* the weak things of this world;"

"things which are despised, and things which are not, hath God *chosen.*" The salvation of men is God's own work; and he selects, and qualifies, and calls his agents who are to be employed in this holy and merciful service. Those whom he selects, it is presumed, are all reconciled to him through the death of his Son, and are sanctified by his Spirit. They are not only possessed of the requisite gifts of understanding and elocution, but are actuated by intense longings for the honour of Christ, and the salvation of mankind; and they have a solemn conviction that a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto them. This conviction of a divine call to the Christian ministry we conceive to be essential to a due discharge of its duties. Let a man take up this ministry as a mere profession, or as a means of honourable subsistence, and he will neither feel his responsibility as he ought, nor will he act under that responsibility with the necessary fidelity and diligence. The danger and misery of unconverted men will make little impression upon his heart, and his efforts to save them will be languid and fitful, grievously wanting in strenuousness and perseverance. He cannot sympathize with the weeping penitent, nor travail in birth with such a one till Christ is formed in him. Those who are intrusted with this ministry must be, in the highest and fullest sense of the expression, "men of God." Theirs must be the yearning zeal which follows the lost sheep of Christ into the wilderness, that it may bring them home rejoicing: the zeal which weeps, and studies, and prays, and preaches, and visits from house to house, for this one object, that it may save men from sin and hell, and present them perfect in Christ Jesus. Let the Wesleyan ministry ever be marked by this spirit, and it will still be owned of God, and no opposition will be able to retard its progress in the world's conversion. In this view I apprehend the recent establishment of our Theological Institution is to be hailed as a benefit of the most valuable kind. It is intended, not merely to give instruction to the candidates for our ministry, and thus more fully prepare them for their work; but to afford the requisite time and means of ascertaining whether or not their hearts are right with God; and whether it is likely that they will endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ: for on no account ought triflers, or men of low and worldly designs, to be sent into our circuits, and intrusted with the care of souls. We trust also, by means of this establishment, to improve the piety of our young preachers, as well as to give them correct and enlarged views of revealed truth. Sanctified learning has been of the greatest advantage to the church in the elucidation of Scripture, and the silencing of gainsayers. It is the "science falsely so called," which places itself in opposition to the revelation of God, that the sacred writers so earnestly rebuke and deprecate. The most devout and useful men that ever served the Lord Christ in our community have been men of sound and varied scholarship.

It will be observed that Mr. Wesley lays great stress upon "fruit," as one of the evidences of a divine call to the ministry of the word. And for this we ought not merely to look at the commencement of our labours, but at every stage of our progress, till we are dismissed by our great Master. It is not enough that our societies and congregations suffer no diminution, and that we go through our appointed course of labour with general acceptance. We are sent to turn men

from their natural levity, worldliness, and sin, to Christ, and to build up believers in holiness; and unless these objects are attained our ministry is a failure. With nothing should we ever be satisfied, either at home or in the mission field, but with the raising up of a people to whom Christ is made of God "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." While there is a man upon earth that is not in this state our work is not done. Alas! even in our own country, we fear there are yet millions who know not what this language means; much less are they brought into the condition which it describes. Ignorance and sin, and misery, their natural effect, still prevail to a fearful extent, both in the crowded population of our manufacturing districts, and among the scattered villagers who are employed in agriculture. Numerous and convenient as are our places of worship, and those of other sections of the church of Christ in this country, immense multitudes of people neglect them altogether; and our only means of access to these perishing outcasts is in the open air. Stimulated by the example of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, and by the higher example of the Lord of glory himself, let us follow those unhappy wanderers from God into the streets and lanes of the city, as well as into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come to the marriage feast of the Lamb, that his house may be filled. What is the world's laugh to us, to whom the Lord has intrusted his message of mercy to dying men? And what are all considerations of ease and honour when the everlasting salvation of redeemed souls is concerned?

Have you, my brethren, duly considered the practical bearing of our proceedings this day? We are rendering thanks to God for Wesleyan Methodism, as his own work, securing to those who are the subjects of it the blessings of pardon, peace, holiness, and joy upon earth, and glory in the world to come. We have united with our people throughout the land in presenting pecuniary donations for pious objects, as thank-offerings to the Lord for this inestimable blessing. If the principles which we assume in all this be true, we are bound to extend to others the advantages which we ourselves enjoy, and that to the utmost limit of our ability. If that revival of religion which we denominate Wesleyan Methodism is indeed what we profess to regard it; if it is in truth the work of God; then it is of the utmost importance to our children, to the unconverted part of our own countrymen, to the deluded disciples of the papacy, to the Jews, to Mohammedan nations, to the entire heathen world; and if we make no adequate exertions to bring them all under its influence, we shall belie our own professions, and shall be condemned out of our own mouths, both by God and man.

I participate with you in all the joyous and holy feelings connected with this memorable festival; but I confess to you that my emotions are of a mixed kind. I rejoice with trembling; for I recollect that "where much is given much is also required" in the way of return and improvement. To all of us, I am persuaded, this should be a day of penitence and of humiliation, as well as a day of sacred gladness. The fact is, that having received such clear and impressive views of divine truth as those which have been committed to us, and such means of usefulness to others, and of spiritual good to ourselves; and

having been favoured at every period of our existence, and in all places, with such copious showers of heavenly influence; we ought to have been a more holy, spiritual, zealous, and self-denying people than God has ever yet seen us to be. Had we all fulfilled our high calling under the rich divine unction which rested upon the Wesleys, and upon such men as Thomas Walsh and John Fletcher, and which has been equally free for every one of us, the world would have felt our influence this day, in a far higher degree, and to a much wider extent, than we can any of us ever expect to witness.

From all connectional vanity and boasting, then, as well as from all personal pride and self-adulation, we ought most religiously to abstain. Whatever piety exists among us is of God. The instruments of this work have all been raised up by him; and the truths which they taught were all derived from his inspired book. The success of all our plans and operations is owing entirely to his blessing; which would have been more richly poured out had we been a more faithful people. That we have been so greatly blessed of the Lord, and that he has made us a blessing to our country and the world, is to us matter of gratitude and rejoicing; but it is our shame and grief that the divine goodness toward us has so often been restrained by our unfaithfulness, and that we have in many instances failed in fulfilling the trust reposed in us for the benefit of mankind at large. The good Lord forgive our lukewarmness, our bigotry, our neglect of the souls of men; and may he this day renew our commission as the messengers of his truth and mercy to the world! The evangelical prophet, having described a period when there shall be such a revival of religion, that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it;" so that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;" twice declares, that, as the direct result of that special interference of almighty power and grace, "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

To a course of diligent and persevering labour for the spiritual benefit of mankind we are bound by the peculiarities of our creed. We believe that all men, without exception, are redeemed by the death of the Son of God, and may therefore obtain eternal life through him. We believe that the Holy Spirit's influence, in the first instance, waiteth not for the call of men, but is freely and spontaneously vouchsafed to every child of Adam. We believe that the actual salvation of mankind is conditional, and is often made to depend, in a great measure, upon human instrumentality; so that one man may perish in consequence of another's neglect. We believe that all men are by nature children of wrath; and that unless they be both justified and regenerated they must inevitably endure the torments of hell for ever. We have received these principles, not as matters of speculation, nor as subjects of irritating controversy, but as truths which have a direct and important bearing upon practice. It will be well for us to ask ourselves, as in the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer and Judge of mankind, whether either as a connection, or as individuals, our exertions to spread true religion in the world, by turn-

ing men to Christ, have ever come up to the standard which our creed demands. How ought our hearts to yearn, and our eyes to weep, over a redeemed world, still covered with ignorance, polluted by sin, and sinking into perdition! How small a part of mankind, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, have so much as heard of our Saviour's name! and how many of those who have it daily upon their lips are utterly regardless of its import! Many thousands even of our regular hearers are so far careless about their spiritual interests, as statedly to turn their backs upon the Lord's table, and stand aloof from Christian fellowship: and how many of the members of our own societies fall short of the Christian salvation, not having as yet believed with the heart unto righteousness; or if they once ran well, have lost their first love! Brethren, our piety must assume a higher character. Our zeal must be more intense and influential. Our ministry must be more powerful and searching. There must be more of the spirit of prayer, both in ourselves and in our people; and there must be a greater devotion of property and labour to the service of Christ, and the advancement of his work in the earth. Till we rise to a higher standard of personal godliness, of liberality, and of holy exertion, our creed and practice will be at variance, and we shall neither fulfil the hopes of the world, nor the designs of God concerning us.

In order to this improvement in our spiritual character, we must all be more richly "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire." When he, the promised Spirit, shall fall upon us, as he did upon the primitive disciples, and upon our fathers in this work, we shall be better qualified for our allotted task. Our perceptions of divine truth will be more distinct and vivid; for darkness will then be more fully removed from our understandings, and all impurity purged away from our affections. When the Spirit has fully sanctified our hearts, we shall speak with a power which our hearers have never yet felt under our word. There is no eloquence like that of a heart burning with the love of Christ. Such a heart speaks in words of flame. By the apostolic ministry, exercised under the direct agency of the Holy Ghost, the world was confessedly "turned upside down." The thinkings and habits of men were entirely changed. The same result will unquestionably follow in the present day, if the same means be applied. Neither the world nor Satan can withstand the power by which they were once vanquished: the power of divine truth, enforced in the spirit of holy love, of earnest prayer, and of mighty faith. It is infinitely desirable, that in our entrance upon the second century of our connectional existence and agency, we should rise into a greater conformity to the example and will of Christ; and that our piety should from this time come up to the full measure of New Testament Christianity. May it please the Lord so to pour out his Spirit upon us, and upon our people everywhere, that we may from this time do his will upon the earth as the angels do in heaven!

A modern writer has deemed himself justified in predicting the downfall of Wesleyan Methodism. The reason which he assigns is, that the system did not take its origin in principle, but in circumstances, and will therefore fade away like that of the Jesuits, and of other orders in the Church of Rome. As we absolutely deny the premises which he has assumed, we attach little importance to the pro-

phecy which he has deduced from them. Judging from the past history of our connection, not in the spirit of a flippant and unsanctified philosophy, but according to the principles of the divine government, as they are laid down in the inspired oracles, we need entertain no fears either respecting our existence or success, while we "walk by the same rule and mind the same thing," which served both as a chart and a guiding star to our fathers. They steadily kept in view the one object of turning men from sin to holiness, by the faithful inculcation of revealed truth, standing aloof from all secular and party contentions; and though they were strenuously opposed, and surrounded as we are with prophets of evil, at every step of their progress they had occasion to sing, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." While we pursue this one object, by the diligent use of the same means, sedulously cultivating the same spirit of holy zeal and enterprise, we have no doubts concerning the result. The Lord will be with us as he was with our fathers; and his arm will be our sure defence.

Should our religious community become extinct, either at an early or remote period, and the system of means for the benefit of mankind which has been intrusted to us be no more, the reason, we presume, will be, not the absence of what is called "principle" in the plans and labours of the Wesleys, but unfaithfulness in their spiritual children. The churches are "golden candlesticks," lighted up by the Lord Jesus, that they may shine for the illumination of the dark and wretched world around them. He "walketh" amidst those "golden candlesticks," observing their state and character; though he is unseen by every eye but that of faith. When "the light that is in them becomes darkness," and they shed a lurid glare rather than the light of life, though he may bear with them for a time, he will at length remove them from his sight. Where are now the Asiatic and African churches that once shone so brightly? They have been extinguished for their infidelity to Him, and as a warning to others that may come after. Where are now the numerous and influential Presbyterian churches, which were raised up by the labours of ejected ministers, and which formerly flourished in different parts of England? Many of them abandoned "the faith which was once delivered to the saints," and degenerated from the piety of their fathers. The divine blessing was therefore withdrawn from them, and their "lamps are gone out." A similar fate doubtless awaits the Wesleyan churches, should they depart from essential truth; sink into worldliness and sloth; and instead of promoting spiritual religion, devote their energies to the attainment of earthly objects, or objects which are directly evil. In this case, the sooner our ministry is abandoned, and our societies are dissolved, the better. We ourselves would then devoutly join in the prayer of our venerated founder, that our very name and memorial might perish for ever.

Brethren, "I hope better things" of our beloved connection, "and things that accompany salvation" upon an extended scale, "though I thus speak." Allow me, however, to remark, and I do it with deep feeling, that, under God, it rests with us, and with those who shall succeed us, to determine what shall be the future state of the Wes-

leyan community, and its influence upon the world. Connected as we are with those who have gone before, and with those who will follow after, we are acting, not for ourselves and contemporaries only, but for future generations, and for people resid ng in the most distant regions of the earth; and by the grace of God we will this day renew our covenant with him and with each other, to devote ourselves to our proper work with redoubled diligence, that we may transmit inviolate to our children that pure and efficient system of doctrine and discipline which we have received. How did the holy men, into whose labours we have entered, preach, and pray, and travel, that they might save souls from death! Yet when they went forth with the Bible in their hands, and the love of Christ in their hearts; when his word was like fire in their bones, and they could not but speak to the people what they knew of his goodness; when they stood in the fields, the highways, the streets, and market-places, regardless alike of the scoffs of profane men, of the summer's heat and of the winter's cold; like ourselves they "walked by faith," and only "saw through a glass darkly." Could they now address us from the spiritual and eternal world into which they have entered; a world where all is truth and reality, and every thing appears in its own proper character; a world where the glories of heaven are all unveiled, and hell and destruction are without a covering; a world where the songs of the blessed are heard in sounds of unmeasured joy, and the wailings of lost souls are heard in all their bitterness and terror; in what language of impressiveness and solemnity would they repeat the maxim which is imbodied in our discipline, "You have nothing to do but to save souls!" How would they charge us to make full proof of our ministry, and even surpass them in holiness, and zeal, and singleness of heart! Would they not admonish us to "beware of men," who would engage us in party strife, and divert us from our great business? Would they not urge and even command us, to watch over our societies with the tenderest care, building them up in faith and love, guarding them against conformity to the world, and labouring to make them, in all places, examples of hallowed seriousness and circumspection, reproving sin with fidelity, and shining as lights among men? Would they not press upon us the duty of still farther extending the work of God at home, especially in the most neglected districts, by every means in our power; and of enlarging our missionary operations beyond all our former doings; accounting our labours nothing, while any region of our fallen world remains unevangelized?

Such, my honoured fathers and brethren, I trust, are the purposes of every one of us this day. Let us then proceed immediately to act in the spirit of these high and solemn resolves. Prophets of evil may attempt to discourage us, and direct hostility may still beset our path; party writers will continue to misrepresent our principles, and "speak all manner of evil against us falsely;" but the Lord is our strength. It is his glory, and the advancement of his spiritual kingdom, that we seek. By his help we will more than ever "give ourselves unto prayer, and to the ministry of the word," as the great means of saving men from sin and wrath. While we are thus employed, we will rest in the calm and cheering assurance, that the Lord whom we serve, and to whose honour our labours are directed, will use our humble instru-

mentality, in connection with that which is put forth by other esteemed sections of his church, in preparing men for future glory, and in bringing about that blessed state of things which the prophets describe, when in all lands crime and misery shall cease, righteousness and truth shall be universally prevalent, and a great voice out of heaven shall proclaim, "BEHOLD, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN, AND HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF SHALL BE WITH THEM, AND BE THEIR GOD."

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## NOTE.

THE following is Dr. Macknight's translation of the 26th verse:—"For ye see the calling of you, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, call you."

He thus comments upon the passage:—

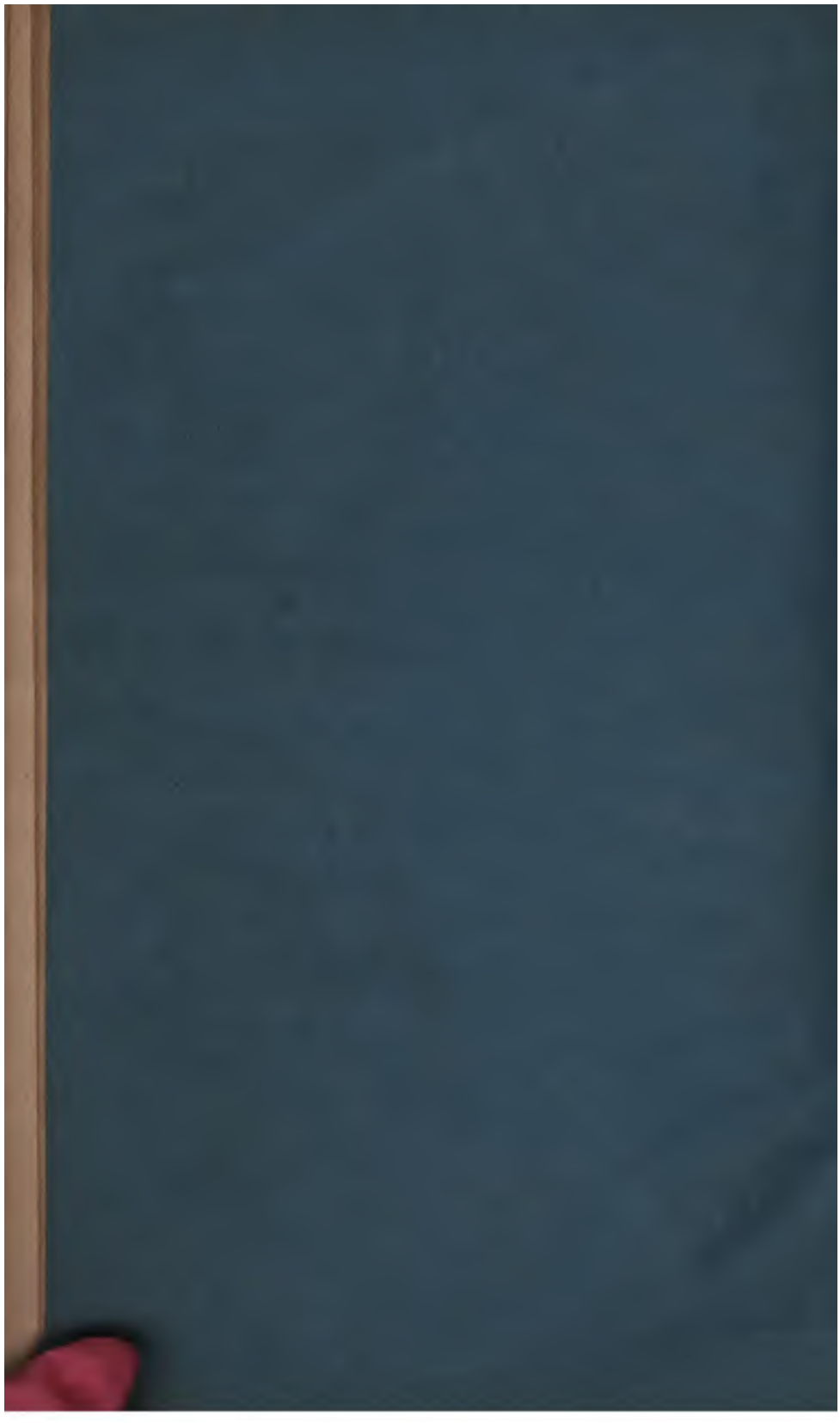
"*Call you.* These words I have supplied from the first clause of the verse. Our translators have supplied the words, *are called*, which convey a sentiment neither true, nor suitable to the apostle's design. It is not true: for even in Judea, 'among the chief rulers, many believed on him,' John xii, 42; particularly Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea. Other Jews likewise of rank and learning were called; such as the nobleman whose son Jesus cured, John iv, 53; and Manaen, Herod's foster brother, and Cornelius, and Gamaliel, and that 'great company of the priests' mentioned Acts vi, 7, who 'were obedient to the faith.' At Ephesus many who used the arts of magic and divination were called, and who were men of learning, as appears from the number and value of their books which they burned after embracing the gospel, Acts xix, 19. And in such numerous churches as those of Antioch, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Rome, it can hardly be doubted that there were disciples in the higher ranks of life. There were brethren even in the emperor's family, Philip. iv, 22. In short, the precepts in the epistle, to masters, to treat their slaves with humanity, and to women, concerning their not adorning themselves with gold, and silver, and costly raiment, show that many wealthy persons had embraced the gospel. On the other hand, though it were true, that 'not many wise men, &c., were called,' it did not suit the apostle's argument to mention it here. For surely, God's not calling many of the wise, &c., joined with his calling the foolish ones of the world to believe, did not put to shame the wise and strong, &c. Whereas, if the discourse be understood of the preachers of the gospel, who were employed to convert the world, all is clear and pertinent. God chose not the learned, the mighty, and the noble ones of this world to preach the gospel, but illiterate and weak men, and men of low birth: and by making them successful in reforming mankind, he put to shame the legislators, statesmen, and philosophers among the heathens, and the learned scribes and doctors among the Jews, who never had done any thing to purpose in that matter."

In denominating the first teachers of Christianity "the foolish things of this world," Dr. Macknight observes that "the apostle imitated the contemptuous language in which the Greek philosophers affected to speak of the Christian preachers. Yet as he does it in irony, he thereby aggrandized them. The first preachers of the gospel, as Dr. Newton observes, on Prophecy, vol. i, p. 237, 'were chiefly a few poor fishermen, of low parentage and education, of no learning or eloquence, of no reputation or authority, despised as Jews by the rest of mankind, and by the Jews as the meanest and worst of themselves. What improper instruments were these to contend with the prejudices of the world, the superstition of the people, the interests of the priests, the vanity of the philosophers, the pride of the rulers, the malice of the Jews, the learning of the Greeks, and the power of Rome!' But the weaker the instruments who converted the world, the greater was the display of the power of God by which they acted."

Mr. Greswell, in his elaborate work on the Parables, takes the same view of the 26th verse. "The context of the passage," says he, "shows that the writer is drawing the attention of the Corinthians to the peculiar character of the *instruments by which*, not that of the *objects for which*, God had thought proper to carry on the work of evangelization." Vol. ii, p. 310.

Such is also the view of the apostle's scope given by the very accomplished Dr. Turton, the Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. "The apostle," says he, "from verse 17 to verse ult., is discoursing on the mode of preaching the gospel, and the agents employed for that purpose. The preaching of the gospel was (verse 17) 'not with wisdom of words;' it was, as it were, (verse 21,) 'the foolishness of preaching;' and with regard to the agents, St. Paul declares, (verses 27, 28,) that 'God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things that are not, to bring to naught things that are.' And the reason assigned (verse 29) is, 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.' In the midst of all this comes in verse 26, which, of course, ought to accord with what goes before, and what follows. Can any thing be more manifest than the object of the apostle in this place? For the purpose of the 'calling' spoken of, it was not the 'wise,' not the 'mighty,' not the 'noble.' No: God had chosen 'the foolish things' to confound 'the wise,' 'the weak things' to confound 'the mighty,' 'things base and despised' to confound 'the noble.'" Text of the English Bible, p. 65.

THE END.



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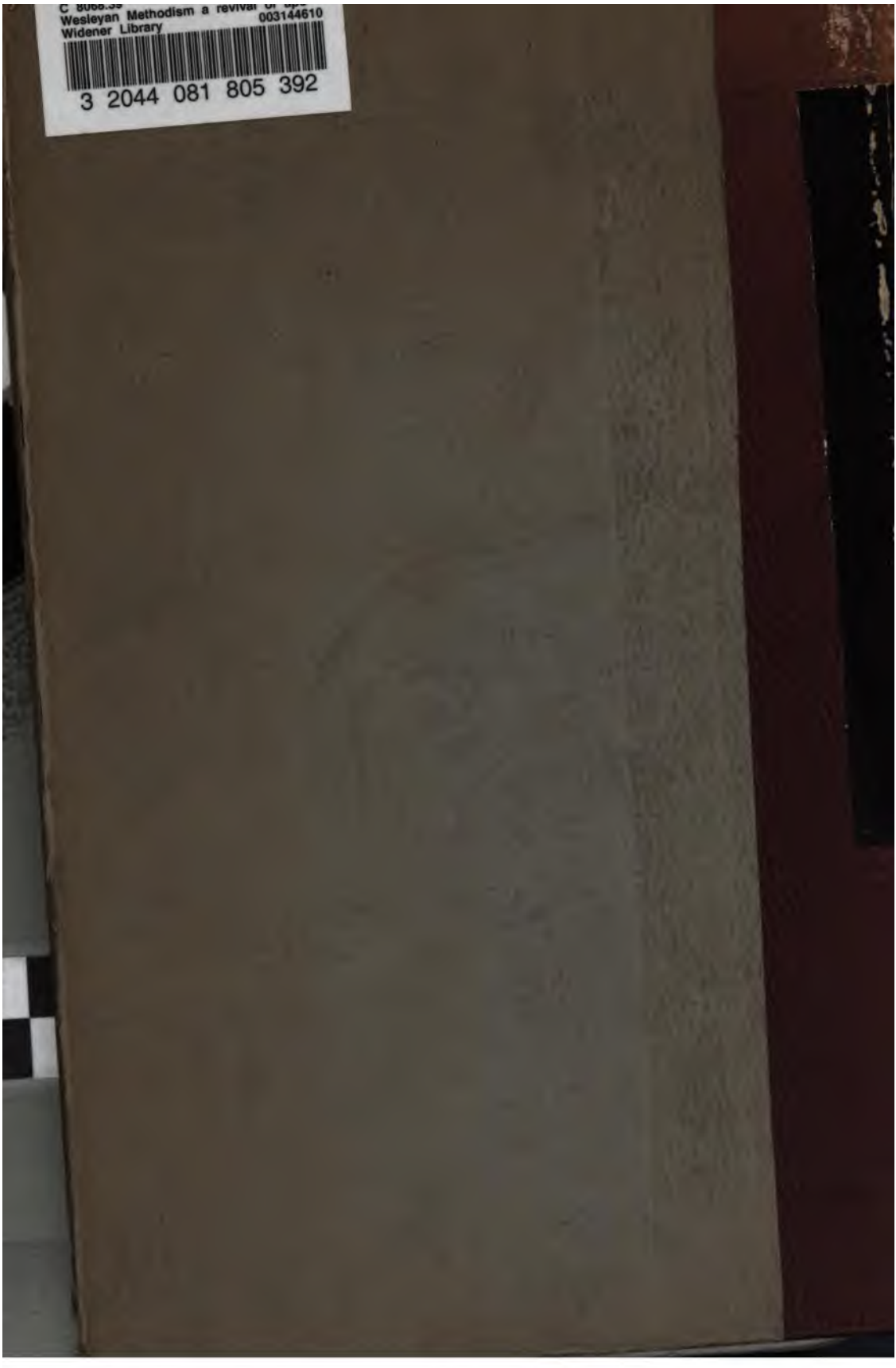
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